



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**
Date: September 13, 2005

Contact: Sherri Johnson
Phone: 919/733-5612

**GOV. EASLEY ASKS CITIZENS TO HEED EVACUATION WARNINGS
AS OPHELIA NEARS THE NORTH CAROLINA COAST**

Tropical Storm Force Winds Expected to Begin Today Along the Southern Coastal Area

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley today asked citizens to heed evacuation warnings by local officials as Ophelia moves closer to the North Carolina coast. Tropical storm force winds are expected today along the state's southern coastal area. Hurricane force winds are possible by early tomorrow, and could last until early Friday morning, as the storm moves north along the coast.

"Ophelia should not be taken lightly," said Easley. "This slow-moving storm could cause flooding, power outages and significant damage because the tropical and hurricane force winds are expected to bear down our coast for several days. Everyone needs to heed the evacuation warnings by their local officials and immediately take the necessary precautions to keep their families safe."

Rainfall associated with Ophelia is forecasted to bring between five and nine inches of rain east of I-95. The storm surge is expected to be four to six feet above tidal levels along the coast and as much as six to eight feet in the Pamlico Sound. The storm surge is anticipated to be five to six feet along the Neuse and Pamlico rivers, and three feet Wednesday night and Thursday morning in the Albemarle Sound.

There are mandatory evacuations in six counties: coastal Brunswick, Carteret (non-residents of Bogue Banks), Dare (Hatteras Island area), Hyde (Ocracoke Island), Onslow (North Topsail) and Pender County. There are voluntary evacuations in eight counties: Carteret, Martin, New Hanover, Pamlico, Perquimans, Onslow, Brunswick and Hyde.

Thirty shelters are now open: seven in Bladen, three in Brunswick County, one in Carteret, two in Columbus, four in Craven (open at 4 p.m. today), one in Hoke, one in Jones, two in New Hanover, six in Onslow, and three in Pender. Schools are closed in Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Dare, Duplin, Hyde, Martin, Onslow, New Hanover, Pamlico and Pender counties.

A total of 350 N.C. National Guard troops have been activated for storm response. There are four strike teams mobilized with 50 troops each in eastern North Carolina. These teams have high-clearance vehicles and a Swift Water Rescue Team assigned to them. In addition, seven helicopters are on standby ready for rescue missions. Urban Search and Rescue teams are also on standby and ready to be deployed.